

Stories of the Saints – Digging Deeper

Noah

Introduction

The story of Noah is probably one of the most popular stories in the Old Testament, and perhaps in all of the Bible. It is one of the few stories that is well-known outside Christian circles, and even appears in pop culture from time to time (the 2007 movie “Evan Almighty” was a parody of the Biblical story). Yet along with its popularity comes misunderstanding. The story of Noah and the great flood is probably one of the most over-simplified and therefore least fully understood stories, especially in terms of God’s actions and the extravagant grace shown throughout. (Yes, you read that right: grace. Yes, there is judgment. But there is much grace shown as well.)

Therefore this week’s brief notes are more study-oriented than practical. There is much to learn, and re-learn, about Noah, since the simplistic treatment of the more palatable parts – animals, boats, etc. – have often overshadowed the deeper significance of the harder-to-understand parts. May these reflections draw you deeper into the story this week, and therefore also draw you into a deeper understanding of God’s love and grace.

Digging Deeper: Things you probably didn’t learn in Sunday School, and things to talk about with those around you.

Though Noah is a popular story to tell to children – boats, animals, and rainbows are appealing – the whole story is much more of a challenge to make “age-appropriate” for children. It deals with the whole depravity of man and God’s judgment, wiping almost the whole of the human population off the earth. Yet it also shows God’s grace, that God chose to save some of those who also deserved death, and through that grace, mankind is preserved.

This grace of God shown to Noah is the same grace shown to all believers. This is a critical point that so many versions of this story (especially “children’s” versions) get wrong. Noah was given grace. He was not chosen by God because he was a good person. He is called good (righteous,

blameless, etc.) because he was chosen by God, being given faith to obey God. In fact, following his being saved from the flood, what does he do? Read Genesis 9:20-27. Is this the sign of a good man who deserved to be saved?

The word “favour” in Genesis 6:8 is the same word in Luke 1:30 when the angel Gabriel tells Mary she has found “favour” with God and will become the mother of Jesus. Did Mary deserve this? No. She was chosen by God through grace, like Noah. And, like us. God’s grace is also evident before the flood event. In Genesis 6:3 we are told of God’s decision to give humanity 120 more years to exist. The New Testament tells us that Noah became a herald – a preacher, a messenger – to the people during those years, calling them to repent (Hebrews 11:7, 2 Peter 2:5). God called to the people during those 120 years through Noah, but they refused to repent. Because of that refusal, they received what was just.

There are many applications to our present-day situation that parallel the story:

1: Just as in Noah’s day, there will be a time when people will be called to account. The delay in the return of Jesus is actually a good thing for us, allowing time for people to repent and receive faith in Him, and for Christians to spread the Gospel (2 Peter 3:1-18).

2: We are saved by grace and called “righteous” through faith, just like Noah (2 Corinthians 5:21). The noteworthy part of the Noah story is not that only a few were saved. It is that anyone was saved at all. The same is true today.

3: We are also saved through water and the Word; the flood is a type and foreshadowing of Baptism (1 Peter 3:18-22). The rainbow is a sign of God’s grace, not a logo for special interest groups. Allow God’s Word to sink deeply into you when you see rainbows; it is the symbol of God’s covenant with His own beloved people to give them grace (Genesis 9:8-17).